

THIS WEEK AT ST. ANDREW'S



ISSUE # 290 December 11, 2025

Open Church: Sanctuary
Wednesdays at 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Meditation Hour: Sanctuary
Wednesdays at 4:00 - 5:30 pm

Activity Group: The Gathering Room
Thursdays at 10:30 am - 12:30 pm
Cancelled until January 8 2026

Worship Service: Sanctuary
Sundays at 10:30 am - 12:00 pm

Christmas Eve Service: Sanctuary
Wednesday December 24 at 7:00 pm
Everyone is welcome to attend!



From the Pulpit

This Sunday's sermon is entitled "Christmas Feelings." Our feelings around Christmas are often ambiguous and complex. We can feel joy as we look forward to Christmas with family, presents and a beautifully decorated Christmas tree. We can feel sadness as we remember those who are no longer with us. We can feel compassion when we reflect upon the problems of homelessness, hunger and poverty. Is there a "right" way to feel at Christmas, or do we simply need to embrace the ambiguity of the season, as we remember that the first Christmas was also difficult for Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the Magi.

- Rev. Wes Denyer

A Time Called Christmas Eve

The stores are closed. There are only a few things left to do. The children have to wait for just one more sleep. At last, we can give ourselves over to the mystery of it all and let the carols, the church, and the story speak to us again. What is the meaning of Christmas Eve?

Historical Roots of Christmas Eve

No one knows when this service came into being. It is likely, however, that the last night of a preparation time for the festival of Christmas took on the character of a vigil, with people waiting together through the last hours before the coming of Christmas Day. Today, for churches without regular Christmas Day worship, a Christmas Eve service also gives the opportunity to celebrate together when Christmas is not on a Sunday.

Finding Meaning in the Tradition

As we welcome the birth of Jesus, we welcome God's light breaking into the world's darkness. We light a Christ candle in the centre of the Advent wreath as a sign of Christ's birth – the light coming into the world. The service may end with each worshipper lighting a candle from the Christ candle, showing that each is now a bearer of the light that comes into the world at Christmas. The story of Jesus' birth is retold, challenging the limits of possibility.

Christmas Eve worship is a time to gather in church with guests and family. We come together at church for many reasons – a desire to know God, curiosity, hope for a new beginning, wonder, nostalgia. The ancient Bible story speaks to each of us, telling us that with God, all things are possible.


Questions for Personal Meditation


1. What brought me here tonight?
2. What impossibilities in my life could become possibilities with God?
3. How can I be a light-bearer in this world?


4. What touches me most in this service?
5. What is God saying to me?


*From PCC web site on Christmas
Jerry Verwey, Session Clerk*


Announcements

 **CELEBRATION OF LIFE:** [John William de Zeeuw](#) (Jack) passed away on November 25 at his residence at Amica in Victoria. He was of strong Christian convictions and active in many churches over the years, the latter being St. Andrew's Presbyterian. A celebration of a life well-lived will be held at Sands Funeral Chapel, at 1803 Quadra Street, on Tuesday, December 16th at 11 am with a reception to follow where we can share fond memories of Jack.

 **TWASA HOLIDAYS:** The last TWASA issue for 2025 will be published on Thursday, December 18th. Please send your submissions in no later than Wednesday December the 17th. The first issue in the new year will be published Thursday, January 9th.

 **THE LINK:** Contribute to St. Andrew's monthly newsletter! Next month's deadline for submissions is **Sunday, December 28th**. To contact the editor or make submissions please email: thelink@standrewsvictoria.ca.

 **WARM TOES:** Let's share the joy of a warm pair of socks with those in need! All sock donations will go to [The Mustard Seed Street Church](#). A donation bin is set up in The Gathering Room to collect socks.

 **SHARE THE JOY:** Let's share the joy of a warm meal with those in need! We're collecting monetary donations for [Christmas hampers](#). All donations are in support of [The Mustard Seed Street Church](#). For cash or cheque donations use your regular donor envelope labeled "Share the Joy". For e-transfer donations please send the transfer to treasurer@standrewsvictoria.ca with "Share the Joy" in the comment section.

Intercultural Learning Journey

The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Intercultural Office is excited to announce the first part of a new 3-part online learning series!

What is 'Becoming Intercultural'?

An 8-module online course featuring 5 hours of content that develops intercultural awareness and equips participants with practical tools to deepen knowledge and transform engagement across cultures.

Learning Themes

- Dynamics of culture and biblical perspectives of differences
- Power dynamics, unconscious bias, and social location
- Intercultural communication tools and cultural humility
- Generative listening skills

Course Features

- Interactive scenarios
- Practical tools
- Theological framework
- Inspiring storytelling videos
- Complete audio lessons
- Extra resources

Who Should Join?

This foundational course is for you if:

- You have an hour a week over 8 weeks to dedicate to learning
- You're just beginning to explore what it means to be intercultural
- You're part of a monoethnic congregation or in multicultural spaces
- You want practical tools for deepening understanding across cultures
- You're already on this journey and want to revisit fundamentals

Ready to Learn?

Launching winter 2026. This is a 2-month shared

learning experience. We encourage any members of congregations to sign up together, or we will try to group members from nearby churches to learn together. Space is limited. [Sign up today to express your interest!](#)

Community Events

👑AETHELING: Presented by Ensemble Laude on Sunday, December 21 at 3:00 pm in the Sanctuary. A concert of richly woven medieval-inspired works on the theme of children, including the fantastic piece A Ceremony of Carols by Benjamin Britten, with Keri Lynn Zwicker, harp. Go [HERE](#) for more information as it becomes available.

🎄A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS IN WALES: Presented by Vox Humana on Wednesday, December 24 at 2:30 pm in the Sanctuary. Go [HERE](#) for more information as it becomes available.

🍗ANNUAL RECOVERY CHRISTMAS DINNER: Presented by St. Andrew's and the Recovery Christmas Dinner Committee on Thursday December 25 at 12:00 - 2:00 pm in the Kirk Hall. Everyone is welcome to enjoy a free buffet style Turkey dinner at St. Andrew's Kirk Hall. Email recoverychristmasdinner@gmail.com for more information about the event.

🕯️AROUND THE TABLE: Laura Kavanagh is continuing as a Spiritual Care Provider at UVic in 2026. One program she is involved with is Inclusive Christians: Around the Table. This is an ecumenical communion service hosted by Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian and United SCP's on Wednesdays at 5:00pm during the university term. The simple service focuses on reading and reflecting on the gospel, prayer, song, silence and sharing bread and wine. While this service is centered on students, all are welcome. After worship everyone is invited to enjoy a meal. We usually have about 20 participants. Help is needed to provide these meals. If you, or a group from your congregation, would like to help prepare a meal in the coming term, please be in touch with Laura as soon as possible by email at lauratodd60@gmail.com or phone at 250-415-8173. The dates are January 7, February 4 and April 1. The meal is simple – vegetarian/vegan soup or chili, bread & butter,

and salad, fruit or veggies. Thank you for supporting students and Inclusive Christians on campus in this way.

🏴 ROBERT BURNS MEMORIAL CONCERT: Presented by The Victoria Scottish Gaelic Choir and on January 25 at 2:30 pm in the Kirk Hall. Join us for an afternoon of Scottish entertainment in celebration of Scotland's beloved bard! Go [HERE](#) for more information and tickets as they become available.



Brenda Gains Confidence in Nicaragua

Brenda Francisca Méndez Ñurinda is an entrepreneur and mother of two, living in Nicaragua. “I come from a large family with few economic resources, but very hardworking,” she explains. During her first years of motherhood, Brenda experienced domestic violence. After leaving the abusive relationship, Brenda looked for work at the local market, where she earned minimal pay for her efforts. To improve her family's future prospects, Brenda participated in a program implemented by PWS&D's local partner, INPRHU. Through the training she received, Brenda developed the knowledge and confidence to start her own small shop. “Each workshop strengthened me. I found a space to share, learn and improve my self-esteem as a woman and mother. My children are my greatest motivation. I decided to resume my high school studies on Sundays, and I am proud of my achievements. Now, I am an entrepreneur,” she shares with excitement. This Advent season, faithfully respond to help families build sustainable livelihoods and advocate for their rights. [This Christmas, help spread hope, peace, joy and love across the globe by supporting PWS&D.](#)

Social Action Spotlight

Refugees and Immigration

At the end of 2024, an estimated 123.2 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations. This represents an increase of 7 million people or 6 per cent compared to the end of 2023. In recent years, narratives around refugees and immigration have become increasingly polarized. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has a long history of advocating for the rights and dignity of refugees, immigrants, migrant workers and asylum seekers. The church's actions stem from the biblical injunction to love and protect the "alien," the "foreigner" and the "stranger" in our midst. Increasingly, language in public and government spheres appears to scapegoat immigrants for issues such as the housing shortage in Canada. Recent changes to Canada's immigration policy, including closing programs that previously welcomed immigrants, changes to visa requirements, and rhetoric and increased policing around the border in response to the demands of the United States are equally concerning. Cuts to the number of refugees that sponsorship agreement holders like The Presbyterian Church in Canada can help resettle to Canada are also troubling. (Read more about this in the PWS&D section of the winter issue of the Presbyterian Connection.) Canada needs to continue to open its doors to refugees, given the already comparatively low levels of refugees being admitted into Canada. Furthermore, Canada should work to address the causes that force people to seek refuge away from their home country, including conflict and climate disasters. Given global cuts to international assistance budgets, we can only expect larger numbers of people to become vulnerable and become refugees.

Questions for reflection

1. When have I personally experienced being a "stranger" or an "outsider"? How did others treat me?
2. Do I carry any unconscious biases or assumptions about immigrants or

refugees? Where do those come from?

3. What does it mean for me to share my resources (social, financial, spiritual) in a world of growing need?

What can we do

Read the letter from the Moderator sent to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship on many of these issues and share your concerns with the government. You can find the letter here: bit.ly/Moderator_Letter2025_Minister-of-Immigration-Refugees-and-Citizenship

Learn more

Visit the Social Action Hub to learn more about what the church has said and done in response to refugees, immigration and migrant workers: presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/immigration-and-xenophobia



The poster features a purple background with festive holly leaves and berries in the corners. At the top center is the Shelbourne Community Kitchen logo, which includes a stylized family icon and a dove. The main title 'HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE' is in large white letters, with the dates 'November 19 - December 19' and the tagline 'Getting Good Food to Good People' below it. A white rounded rectangle contains a list of 'Most Needed Donations' with green checkmarks next to each item. At the bottom, it provides the donation drop-off location and times, a QR code for cash donations, and a thank-you message with the website URL.

SHELBOURNE Community KITCHEN

HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE

November 19 - December 19
Getting Good Food to Good People

Most Needed Donations

- ✓ **Canned Proteins:** canned plain beans, canned tuna/salmon/ham, peanut/nut butters, dried beans and lentils
- ✓ **Vegetables/Fruits:** Low-sodium canned vegetables, low-sugar canned fruit, apple sauce, fruit cups for kids lunches
- ✓ **Canned Tomatoes**
- ✓ **Drinks/Dairy Alternatives:** Coffee, tea, juice boxes, shelf-stable unsweetened milk alternatives (rice, soy, almond, coconut etc.)
- ✓ **Grains:** Rice, pasta, whole grain cereals, oatmeal, crackers, granola bars, gluten-free options
- ✓ **Kitchen Essentials:** pasta sauce, cooking oil, sugar, spices
- ✓ **Instant Meals:** baked beans, canned soups, stews, instant noodles, craft dinner. Low-sodium and gluten-free alternatives in high demand
- ✓ **Toilet Paper**

Foods must be unopened and in their original package

DONATION DROP OFF: 101-3787 Cedar Hill Rd.
Tuesday 4PM - 7PM
Wednesday & Thursday 10AM - 1PM

Cash Donations



Thank You for Your Support

www.shelbournecommunitykitchen.ca